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spectrum

Rapper cruises into town to 'disturb the peace'

Ludacris performs at a heavily-guarded Siegal Center

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CT STAFF WRITER

Richmond got a taste of "Southern Hospitality," when Ludacris arrived at the packed ALLTEL Pavilion in a stretch Lincoln Navigator Friday night. The concert, scheduled to start at 8 p.m., did not begin until 8:35p.m., but was worth the wait.

The night started with Ebony Quest, a dance troupe at VCU.

REVIEW

Things started out a little rough. There were technical difficulties with the music a dancer got her belly chain caught in her hair. Still, the show went on.

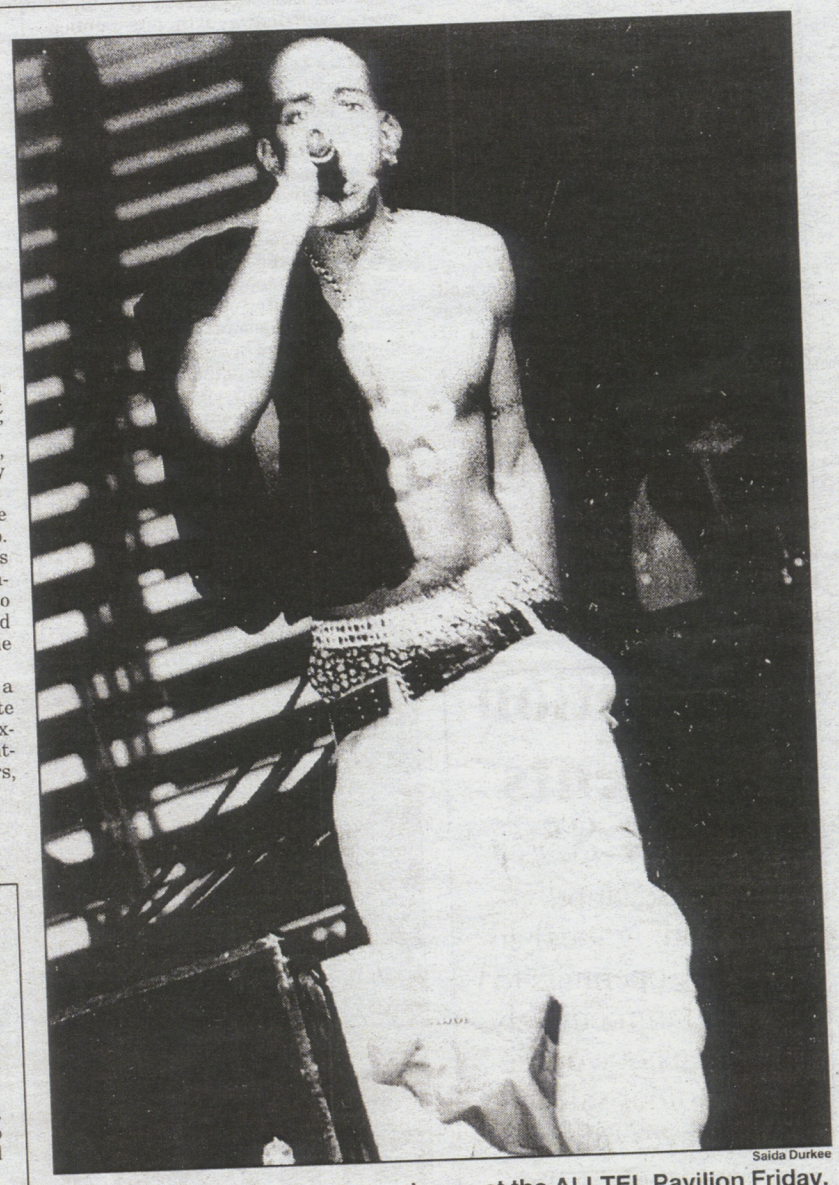
Zulu, "the Big Lip Bandit" from Hot 99.3 morning, hyped the crowd by throwing freebies and T-shirts into the audience.

After waiting 40 minutes, Ludacris hit the stage, accompanied by the DTP (Disturbing the Peace) camp. What made this concert special was that Ludacris was not the only artist performing that night. Every person performing on-stage was featured in a showcase.

Ludacris sang a variety of songs from his old album, "Ludacris: Back for the First Time," and his new album, "Word of Mouf." The crowd loved every minute of the show, often singing along and dancing, especially for Ludacris' more popular songs.

A highlight in the night's performance was Shawna, a member of the DTP camp. Shawna accompanied Ludacris on "What's your Fantasy" and showed love to the ladies in the audience. Disk Jockey J.C. also got love from the ladies when he performed a low-key strip show while working the turntables.

Ludacris performed for an hour and a half show without a dull moment. Despite the confusion finding a seat and the extremely tight security, which included pat-downs, bag checks and metal detectors, this show was worth the $15.



Saida Durkee

Ludacris performed nearly two hours at the ALLTEL Pavilion Friday.

1ST PERSON:

A down-to-earth rapper

Fans from all over the Richmond area flocked to see Def Jam recording artist Ludacris, Friday. Even if you didn't get a chance to catch the concert, it was difficult not to know it was there. Spots advertising the concert were played on six separate local radio stations and flyers were posted around town. VCU, who hosted the concert, supplied students with discounted rates.

We were backstage waiting for our chance not only to photograph the concert, but also to meet the man himself. We found our way to the second level of the Siegel Center to Founders Room, where Ludacris was to host a meet and greet with fans. Around 8:15 p.m., he arrived with his crew and fellow performers and made a swift run through the crowd, and made his way back toward the stage. We happened to catch him before he got onto the elevator, and asked him if we could take his picture. "Sure," he said and posed for a quick picture.

Although our motive at the concert was to take photographs, it was difficult not to notice the appeal of this artist. Even though we spent most our time running from one side of the stage to the other, we had some chances to sit back and watch. At one point, we stood between the barrier and the stage and saw Shawna, the female member of Ludacris' entourage lean over and talk to fans in the front row. Kids from the backstage area were invited up to the stage to watch the artists perform. We watched the crowd respond to his music, and Ludacris perform not for himself but for the fans.

As they worked their way off the stage, we got the chance to meet Shawna, who signed our All Access pass and allowed us to take pictures.

"What's your name?" she asked, signing my pass "To Brenda, God Bless. Shawna."

She shook my hand and made her rounds with other fans. We found our way back to the dressing room where Ludacris and his crew were relaxing.

Offstage, his character had changed from "Gangta Thug" as seen in his videos, to a very approachable, smiling guy, just happy to be with his friends and relax. He met with fans, signed some photographs and allowed us to shoot some more candid pictures.

Unlike many artists, who refuse to talk to the press or sign autographs, he welcomed us and was willing to sign as many autographs as we wanted with his trademark signature, "Ludacris (404)". The night ended with a huge turn at the concert and a top performance by Ludacris.

– by Brenda Berson & Saida Durkee

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